



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE NINETEENTH EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE ACADEMIES AND HIGH SCHOOLS IN RELATIONS WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

NOTE.—This conference was held November 16 and 17, 1906. The paper by Dean Owen was presented at the general session.

SOCIAL EDUCATION THROUGH THE SCHOOL

WILLIAM BISHOP OWEN

Dean of the University of Chicago High School

It is a commonplace of the present-day educational literature that the school is a social institution. This conception, which is as old as Plato at least, is receiving renewed emphasis in consequence of the growing attention given to the social sciences and the point of view prevalent in the investigations and discussions in these sciences. This point of view is, in brief, that the whole comes before the part, that society is an organism, that every social institution is to be tested by its fitness to perform that social service that may reasonably be expected of it in an actual society as now constituted, or in an ideal state conceived as an end to be realized. As already hinted, this view of the school is not altogether a modern development. The history of educational theory and practice shows clearly that the philosophical theorist and the practical reformer alike have been conscious of the essential function of the school in an industrial community, a governmental system, a kingdom of God on earth, or a social utopia. What is new in our more recent opinion is due to the fact that this conception is but one phase of a movement, all along the line, looking toward a unified view of the world and society, that will make individual effort rational and social aims intelligible. The school is to be understood in relation to society, and society is to be understood in relation to the rest of the world. The modern intellectual endeavor aims to understand force and life by the aid

of the different sciences, not that the world may be parceled and farmed out in perpetuity, but that universal order may be established and free and untrammelled communication be guaranteed. Specialization in the sciences is not an evidence of the despair of being able to understand the whole, but rather the recognized means of ultimately reaching such an understanding. The school as an institution, therefore, and education as a function, get new meaning when viewed in relation to this unifying effort of the modern mind.

It is not the purpose of this paper to indulge in further analysis of the general intellectual situation in which we find ourselves, but rather to indicate the point of view taken in what is later to be said; and to preface a brief résumé of some of the senses in which the school is currently discussed as a social institution. Without aiming at an exhaustive enumeration, let us note three possible meanings of the phrase. The school is a social institution in that it is an instrument used by society to accomplish a particular work; it is, again, a social institution in that it is the means for socializing future members of society; it is a social institution once more in that it is itself a society.

It is this third sense of the phrase that we wish to discuss in this paper. Without attempting an exhaustive definition, we may assume a mature society to be a number of human beings who are led by common or connected interests to live together in an intercourse formed in response to those interests. The community may be large or small, the intercourse close or loose, the interests simple and tangible or complex and varying. We may and do speak of the society of a village or of the United States. Custom and practical considerations lead us to select our society on the basis of common industrial interests. But we are often led to a different grouping on the basis of intellectual or artistic interests. Whatever the grouping, then, it is the common interest and activity that serve as the criterion of selection.

We are finding it increasingly difficult, however, in dealing with social groups, to get satisfactory results from the method of considering some one predominant and outstanding interest and neglecting the other interests of the individuals in the group.

This point may be well illustrated by examples taken from the industrial field. It is not such a long time since it was the accepted practice to group men in factories, and in so doing to have regard only for the gain-getting interest of the employers. Gradually it is coming to be recognized that it is the whole man who goes into the factory in the morning and out in the evening; that merely to serve the selfish purpose of the employer it is necessary to provide for the whole man, physical, intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and social. This is the meaning of the hospital, the gymnasium, the reading-room and evening classes, the playground and clubrooms in connection with many of our model factories. All this, be it noted, is done for mature men and women who, according to the old view, could well be left to provide these things for themselves. The factory has come to be regarded as a social institution. The school should be regarded in the same way. It is the whole pupil who goes to school. It is a common saying that education is not a preparation for life; it is life. This can be made true only on condition that the school cares for all the interests which govern the child's life while he is under the influence of the school.

If we were to accept this and the two preceding views of the school as essentially correct, and were to proceed to organize such an institution *de novo*, we might, I think, proceed in some such way as this. We should preface our undertaking by laying down some fundamental principles to govern our procedure. We should first insist that we should regard the life of the child as a whole, recognizing the justice of the current educational doctrine that in all his activity the child is one. Furthermore, we should insist that the child's world is not the world of the adult and that any programme which overlooks this fact is doomed to but partial success. After laying down these principles, we might turn to the consideration of the child, and ask ourselves what are the instincts, impulses, and desires which furnish the motive-power of the child's life. Having made a careful study of the child from this standpoint we should then turn to the provision made by society for guiding and directing these impulses. Putting these two lists side by side, we should be careful to pro-

vide that the whole child should receive adequate direction and control, to the end that he might grow up and become a useful and happy member of society. Sparing ourselves this theoretical procedure, in a paper which has a practical aim, let us select for our consideration certain defects in our present educational practice which such a comparison would reveal.

There are three social institutions which have, in the main, the supervision of the child's education, the family, the church, and the school. It will be agreed at once, I think, that there is no well-recognized distribution of function between these three institutions. The family controls the entire life of the child until he is of school age. Then he is divided between the family, the church, and the school. This traditional division might theoretically be satisfactory. The question is: Does it actually work well in practice? Is it a fact that the average child gets a satisfactory training through these three agencies? If he does not, who is to receive the blame, or, better, who is to distribute it? If it were true that each institution had a certain definite responsibility, failure might easily be laid at the right door. If, however, such failure is due, as it seems to me it is, to the neglect to make any such definite division of responsibility, what recourse are we then to have? It is the purpose of this paper to raise this question and to suggest at least a partial answer.

Let us consider some well-known facts bearing on this question. The family was the first school and the first church. However simple the training given, this primitive condition did have the advantage of caring for the whole child. With the growth of society and increase of its demands, the church and the school, in whatever form, undertook to supplement and extend the work of the family. So long as the church and the school, as well as the family, were thought to exist for the state, this division of responsibility and labor seemed to work satisfactorily. The same may be said of the period when the family and the state were thought to exist for the church. Unity of effort was enforced by the one controlling power. But, with the separation of church and state and the growth of individualism, all this has been changed. The church does what it can, the family what it can, the school

what it can, and is the result satisfactory? We are constantly hearing complaints of the failure of our institutions to give adequate preparation for life, not on the intellectual side only, but on the moral and social side. In the press, cases of youthful criminals are cited as proofs of the failure of our system. The same cases are used by those who would account for it all by our exclusion of religious training, or the Bible, from the schools, or again by those who would prove that our great public schools are godless institutions. There are other symptoms that point in the same direction. Consider the efforts that are being made in other directions to prevent, or repair these failures. In the great cities our park boards are providing the means for social training, or life, if you please, with a liberality and a wisdom that are truly astonishing. Is it not an anomaly that the public which seems to restrict the schools to a narrowly intellectual work so readily provides the means for doing what it has not permitted the school to do? Other efforts of a similar nature are being made by organizations and individuals. The Young Men's Christian Association, while professedly and sincerely religious in its ultimate aim, is providing purely social opportunities to the youth who can find them nowhere else. The social settlements are doing a similar work for a purely social purpose. I should not wish to be regarded as criticizing the work of these institutions and individuals. I am using them merely as evidences that society is recognizing the inadequacy of existing institutions for the work they are supposed to do.

I recognize, of course, that it may be said that this all has nothing to do with the schools; that they are created to do a certain work, and that society prefers to supplement that work by such voluntary effort because this is to do better by the schools and better by the children. Nevertheless, I venture to return to the point raised a moment ago and to repeat that it is the whole child that goes to school. From early morning until late afternoon the life of the schoolboy is under the control of the school. Most of his waking hours, therefore, are spent under its influence. Add to this the fact that he now leaves it when he is on the threshold of manhood, and we get an idea of how large a pro-

portion of his life is spent under its care. The question narrows to this, then: Can the school shirk the responsibility for the social education of the pupil? I make bold to say that it cannot.

Let me briefly expound the point of view toward which this whole paper has been converging. The school gathers together a number of pupils for intellectual purposes, if you please. These pupils spend a large portion of their young lives in the school, or under its influence. The same young people are born into the world with social instincts which are to weld them to the society of the future. In their intercourse with their fellows, these interests are awakened and seek normal expression. I submit, therefore, that it is not only the duty of the school to guide and control the impulses which it stimulates, but that it is a golden opportunity to give the pupil just such training as society demands. What then do I mean by social training? I answer, training in intercourse with one's fellows, whether teacher, or pupil, in the classroom or out, so as to contribute to the furtherance of the task in hand, be it work, or play, in accordance with worthy standards of what is good and beautiful and true. A large programme for the school, you say. Yes, but if society asks it of the pupil, why may it not ask help of the school? But it is not alone for the sake of society that I ask it. It is the right of the child.

What I propose, then, is a programme of enlargement of the functions of the school to include the general social training of the child, so far as the life of the child in the school affords opportunity. I have not the time, nor you the patience, to consider what the details of such a programme would be. I am satisfied to formulate the general point of view, and shall briefly consider some of the more general features of what seems to me a practical way of going about the work.

First, then, as to the method of procedure. This, I may say at once, should be that of experiment. It would be foolhardy, were we endowed with supreme wisdom, to launch an ambitious programme of undertakings on a community whose habits and ideals are already pretty well fixed. Inasmuch as we are not so endowed, we can begin humbly with slight innovations and win our way, step by step. The modern scientific world has accepted

as the final method of investigation, that of experiment. Why should we not adopt the same method in our attempts to solve social problems? The fact is such methods are employed in almost all walks of life, in business, in politics. Booker T. Washington is conducting a great experiment in social education. Jane Addams has been at the head of a great social laboratory for years. Can it be that the institution which should be the very embodiment of this idea, may not employ it, save in mere intellectual lines? Much as I believe that Principal Armstrong is on the wrong track in separating the boys and the girls in the Englewood High School, I consider it a great thing that the Chicago Board of Education voted to allow him to *try* the experiment.

Now there are three things necessary for the conduct of an experiment that is to be successful and instructive: a well-formed plan, a competent experimenter, and a careful test of results. If we are to undertake the work of experimenting on social lines in our schools, we shall have to look well to these three factors. As to the first little need be said. Any plan will need to take into account the conditions prevailing in the community which the school serves. An experiment in a rural school would probably differ widely from one in a great city school. The same thing would hold good as between the different schools of a single city. It is just because we are trying to deal with a definite set of conditions in each separate case that we cannot lay down hard and fast rules for all. We wish merely to insist that success will depend largely on careful planning with reference to particular conditions. The second factor in the experiment is a competent experimenter. I hardly need to insist that by an experiment I do not mean a happy-go-lucky attempt at innovation, just to see what will happen. I mean something as sincere as ever a chemist or physicist undertook in his laboratory. Hence the need of a trained experimenter, who shall know just what is going on and will be able to estimate results. I cannot attempt to say whether the average school is at present blessed with such a teacher or such teachers. I should like, however, to point out that, if the school undertakes to enlarge its work in this direction, there will be need of changes in the customary training given to teachers.

Such change will consist, not so much in the enlargement of the course of study on the intellectual side, as in the added emphasis on the real nature and scope of the teacher's work. There will be a more extended training in sociology and social psychology than is now usual, and such theoretical training will have to be supplemented by actual practice in some model school. Such training will not come as an additional and extraneous requirement, but as giving organic unity to the teacher's work in and out of the classroom. The testing of the results in such an experiment would naturally follow. Failures would lead to revision of plans and adoption of better means. This, in brief, is the method of experiment. At bottom, there is nothing new in the suggestion that it be extended to this kind of work. Every live teacher, every good school, employs it to a degree. What we need is the recognition of the fact that just this is the business of the school. We are to experiment, not on, but with the children. To do this, not only in the laboratory, but throughout the school, is at once to unify the whole work of the school, and to induct the pupil into the educational process which is to order his life.

It might suffice to close with this exposition of the thesis of this paper. But, because I have a practical end in view, I shall ask you to bear with me while I discuss briefly some of the difficulties in the way of carrying out such a plan, as well as some of the helps that can be relied on and some of the problems that may be attacked from this point of view. The first obstacle that will be met is the condition of the laws governing school children. With apologies to those of you possessing a legal training, I may say that our legislation has been made largely with reference to adults. The law is for citizens. Children are either so young that they are under the control of their parents and are ignored, or they are old enough to be treated as adults. That there is a number of years when they cannot be justly treated in either of these ways is overlooked. To be sure, we are now beginning to change all this. Our laws as to the age of consent, as to child labor, and especially the creation of juvenile courts are indications of a growing recognition that the law must take cognizance of the fact that there is a period in a child's life when he cannot be

regarded merely as a member of a family, nor yet as a mature and responsible person. This period corresponds roughly with the years of school life. It would seem possible, at least, that the law would come to recognize the right of the school to a limited control over the child during this period. It cannot be said here just what that control should be. But it would seem fair to presume as its principle, that the institution, to which the law compels a child to go for education, would eventually be granted sufficient control to make that education as full and complete for all who are sent there as our wisdom would dictate. It would seem that the state could and ought to do for the child before he becomes a criminal what the state is forced to do in order to reclaim him after he has become a criminal. Let the schools attempt experiments in the broader way suggested, and I believe authority would eventually be given them sufficient for the purpose. Recent decisions of the state courts as to the authority of school boards to deal with the fraternity question point in this direction.

Popular prejudice would many times stand in the way. It is often said that the American people are more interested in their schools than in any other one feature of their social life. This is undoubtedly true. But this body of school teachers will agree that this same American people have pretty definite ideas as to what a school should attempt to do, and as to the extent to which the teacher's authority reaches. Again, I say, nothing but a wise system of carefully conducted experiments will serve to overcome this prejudice. Results will speak for themselves, and is it not results that we are supposed to set above everything else?

Financial considerations will also act as an obstacle in some quarters. To carry on such work as has been suggested may lead to increased expense. Our school buildings may have to undergo certain modifications from the accepted type. An extra teacher may have to be employed, and the teachers now employed may need to be relieved of a part of the routine classroom work that they may have time for new duties. Here, again, we need not wait until the money is at hand. A clear demonstration of a need made through a successful undertaking will be worth a deal of

theoretical argument in advance. The fact is, I believe, that up to date no improvement in our school organization or curriculum has had to wait long for the necessary financial support.

The fear of paternalism in the school will be an obstacle. American civilization is founded on individualism. As a people, we are suspicious of the encroachment of the many on the rights of the one, whether that be in the form of paternalism or socialism. It is but natural that the schools should reflect this attitude. We are right in demanding that the schools should foster and develop individualism intellectual and moral. Nothing that has been said should be construed to be out of harmony with this ideal. Theoretically, at least, we can conceive of such an organization of the school life as would promote rather than repress the development of the highest form of individual life.

There are many helps at hand that may be utilized in carrying out our programme. I may take the time to mention one which under the present circumstances seems to be the most promising, namely, the parents' association. There is a wide-spread movement looking toward the organization of such associations in connection with every school. While it is too early to venture a statement of all that may be accomplished through this instrumentality, enough has already been done to warrant our belief in its efficacy. First of all the parents' association provides a convenient way of informing the school community of what the school is trying to do. The mere establishment of a clear understanding between the school and the community is in itself a great gain. It prevents the conception that the school, somehow or other, when once it is launched, may go on living an independent existence in the community that created and continues to support it. But more important is the rôle which such an association may be made to play in the introduction of new methods into the school. This is true whether the new ideas come from the school authorities or the single lay member. The school, like all institutions, is and should be marked by a wise conservatism in its actions. The parents' association provides a way of developing a powerful public opinion based on submission of evidence and plain discussion. With such public opinion to support them, the

school authorities may easily do what might otherwise be regarded as venturesome caprice. In the case of the public schools, in particular, where, as I have suggested, the authority of the teacher is either limited, or at least poorly defined, the opinion and support of the parents are invaluable guides. In one case of which I have intimate knowledge, a social experiment such as I have suggested has been made possible only through the support of such an association. The parents conducted the discussion of the policy for the period of a year and reached a conclusion which has since been carried out in practice. Moreover, the parents have willingly provided the funds with which to carry out the new policy. I may say that without this hearty co-operation of the parents the radical change from one social system to another would hardly have been inaugurated by the school authorities.

The parents can be of assistance, not merely through associated effort, but individually and in groups. Nothing proves more strikingly the limited intellectual ideals and aims of our schools than the practical exclusion of the parents from the life of the school. The church, with its broader aim, takes in the whole family. To a large degree, the school can do the same. I do not mean that a parent is not received with politeness into the principal's office. Rather is it true that the parent is not provided a place in the whole scheme. Were the schools to undertake a larger social work, most competent advisers and helpers would be found among the parents, helpers whose fitness would not be questioned and whose time would be at the disposal of the school for the mere asking.

With social organization must go social control. This control should be in the hands of the school authorities. I have a feeling that there is a tendency among the rising generation to regard the teacher with less than the old-time reverence. The modern teacher would be the first to protest against an artificial and constrained respect. What is needed and what the pupil should be made to realize, is that the school should have the authority to organize its own life. This authority should rest, to be sure, on nothing else than the actual existing relations between pupil and teacher. Those relations are simple and intelligible to the young-

est pupil. The duty and the right of maintaining these relations should belong to the teacher. Experiments in pupil government may be useful and instructive as practice in working the machinery of control, but back of the school should be found the authority of the teacher, and back of the teacher, the authority of the state. I do not believe in pupil government, nor in teacher government, but in school government.

Just where then is this social experiment to begin? What concrete thing is it to do that is not already being done? Perhaps the best general answer that can be made is that it is not so much a question of new activities as one of method and point of view in the conduct of the old. A brief treatment of certain common features of school life may serve as an answer to the question.

One striking defect of our schools is the failure to provide opportunity for mere social recreation—what we often call in a restricted sense “social life.” It is safe to say that the instinct for this form of relaxation, or pleasure, if you please, is as natural and harmless as may well be. In the case of adults we recognize and provide for its expression. But the school is a place for work, so recreation must be left out. And where, pray, does the child get his recreation? On the way to and from school, in the fraternity house, anywhere that it may be found. So far as this is found under the control of the parent, well and good. But the fact is, the natural companionship of the pupils is with his school-mates. The school society, in reality, is formed every morning when the pupils leave their homes, and is dissolved each evening as they reach their homes. The very act of bringing the young together for school purposes is a stimulus to their social instincts. The school ought to recognize this, and in connection with, and under the control of, the school there ought to be provided ample opportunity for purely social recreation. This policy would not contemplate at all the confusing of two different aims, the intellectual and the social, but the fusion of the two into a larger and more inclusive aim. I would advocate, to be explicit, the introduction into the programme of the school regular social occasions at stated and reasonably frequent intervals. These social meetings might take whatever form the circumstances would suggest.

They should be conducted under school control in such a way as to be a source of pleasure to the pupils and of real educational value. Ask yourselves about our ideals as to the all-around training of our own children. Do we not consider their social training an essential element in their future success, just as essential as their intellectual training? Can we not secure this training in large measure, if we but know how, in connection with their school life? We trust this whole side of education to the family. But I submit that the family does not and cannot control the social training that for good or ill is an inevitable accompaniment of the gathering together of so many young people into the school. Instead of deliberately neglecting these patent facts, why should we not utilize them as a golden opportunity for rounding out our educational scheme? We should thus unify and enrich the life of the children and bind them by the strongest ties to the school, and the indirect influence of such a course on the purely intellectual work of the school would be of the best. I know of an experiment of this kind in a school and I can bear testimony that in the opinion of teachers and pupils the experiment is an unqualified success.

That some such provision is needed in our schools is proved by the development of the high-school fraternities and sororities. The real meaning of these organizations is that the pupils have in this way attempted to provide just such social opportunities as we have suggested. It is idle to object to them that they are selfish and inadequate, when we remember that they are the creations of young and inexperienced children. It is equally idle to declaim against them unless we can provide some other system that will do for all what they do for some. I am strongly opposed to the fraternity system in our schools, but I hope that I am not bigoted on the question. My fundamental and single objection to them is the fact that they organize the school on a social basis that is narrow and selfish. I can conceive, however, a social organization of the school in which they might possibly be of but little significance. But as long as the life of the school is what it now is, they serve but to emphasize our neglect. I can appreciate the theoretical defense made in their behalf by a

culture-epoch theory of history, a recapitulatory biology or phylogenetic sociology. The simple fact is that they stand in the way of a social organization of the school that shall provide for all free expressions to social instinct, controlled development of social power, and a happy enjoyment of the society of one's fellows. The best way to deal with the school fraternity is to beat it at its own game.

Other vexed questions of school policy and management find a reasonable solution when viewed from this standpoint. School athletics are an instance in point. As at present conducted, they are for the selected few. All that is said for them as developing individual courage and prowess and as focusing at times the spirit of the school could as well be said were they but incidental to a larger athletic life in which all could participate. Provision for supervised and directed play for all pupils is the ideal, not toward which we should strive, but with which we should begin. We talk a great deal about the play-instinct and its place in intellectual and social development. But we promote a system of school athletics that throws our theories to the winds. Let some one of our schools set itself resolutely to experiment with this problem and give us all the benefit of the results. Could we ask for a better chance to provide social and moral training than might be found on a well-equipped playground under the control of rightly trained instructors? The park commissioners have recognized the opportunities, even if the board of education has not.

If the point of view we have developed is correct, what shall we say of coeducation in the schools? The problem is not an easy one, and it bids fair to become more difficult with the growing complexity of our life. Admitting, then, the difficulties to exist, what shall be our method of procedure? We have a system thoroughly established—at least in the schools of the Middle West. In the main, it has worked satisfactorily. Now that we are conscious of certain unfavorable tendencies and results, what should be our recourse? Should we hastily retrace our steps and abandon what we have already gained? Should we not rather ask ourselves if these shortcomings of the system are not due to the neglect to round out and complete it? I prefer to believe that

the latter is the way of wisdom. Mechanically to mass boys and girls together in a classroom or in the halls is not coeducation. The problem does not have its origin in the classroom. It is pushed in from outside. Not originating there, it cannot be solved there. It is a problem again of the organization of the whole school life. Why can we not realize what the problem is and adopt direct means to solve it instead of evading or retreating? Boys and girls should be taught to live and work together as they will be called upon to live and work in life. Are the elements of the problem so concealed, or the ways of solving it so hidden, that we must despair? The family does not despair, why should the school? Let us keep up our courage and try a little longer. The end is worth the pains. We can and must adopt a social system in our schools within which the much-talked-of difficulties will disappear because they are made impossible. With due allowance for the exception that proves the rule, I believe this can be accomplished. I can bear one further word of testimony. I am connected with a private high school of six hundred pupils, the majority of whom are boys. The parents pay a moderate-sized tuition fee, as such things go. You would expect them to be critical and free in the expression of their opinions. We have attempted to solve the problem through this broader social organization, whose aims I have been trying to expound. It is a fact that you may take for what it is worth that the officers of the school find the problem less and less difficult and the criticisms of parents on this score reduced to a negligible quantity. What we want is not less but more coeducation of the right sort.

It would be easy to illustrate by presenting other points at which experiments might begin. The lunch-room, the newspaper, the library, school and class excursions, before and after school, above all the classroom itself are available and suitable. You will be glad that I am going to leave these for your own consideration.

We have attempted to suggest a fuller definition of our conception of the social function of the school. We have urged that this broader and truer view must be adopted if we are to broaden our work. We have touched on facts that seem to show that the

school can and ought to undertake the task. As a practical way of beginning we have suggested the well-proved method of experiment. But whatever the verdict on the wisdom of the theory and the remedy, the facts will remain for our consideration, if not our confounding. A pupil can no more be a mere pupil than a machinist can be a mere machinist. If the school brings children together it should teach them to live together, serious and useful, but also glad and happy lives. The two aims are not conflicting but conspiring. It might seem easier to limit our aim and improve our product. But narrowing the aim will not narrow human nature, the whole of which, both for pupil and teacher, seeks full expression in the school life.